

I support media regulation

May 31, 2003

Commissioners

I am writing to you today to comment on Docket No. 02-277, The Biennial Review of the FCC's broadcast media ownership rules. In its goals to promote competition, diversity and localism in today's media market, I strongly believe that the FCC should retain all of the current media ownership rules now in question. These rules serve the public interest by limiting the market power of already huge companies in the broadcast industry.

I urge you to resist relaxing the FCC regulations that limit the number of media sources that can be monopolized by a single company. The regulations have a purpose: to preserve our democracy, security, and safety by enabling the public to have access to multiple sources of information. Of primary concern is local security and safety. What happens when a single company like Clear Channel owns the vast majority of the radio stations for example, and there is a regional emergency? Calls into radio stations to alert fellow citizens are stymied, because there is no one at the station to receive and broadcast the alert! This is fact happened in the town of Minot, South Dakota.

To reasoning that the television broadcasters are suffering due to lost market share to cable, DvD and other media sources is deceptive. The same big five companies 70% of the media, including those same cable, Dvd, and Internet services.

Certainly what is needed is regulated change. Simply letting companies buy more airspaces, newspapers, and other media channels is killing fair and equal access by default. Consider the California/west coast energy debacle. The deregulation of this public service industry only ended in billions bilked out of citizens who depend on this public utility and it also the crushed California budget. A balance between local, public access and commercial, profit based broadcasting is something that deregulation will destroy. Companies like Clear Channel have no interest in quality, diverse information broadcasting, but in garnering as many consumer dollars as they can muster, regardless of the public's right to fairly presented and service-based information.

Again, I urge you to resist the relaxation of regulations governing the quantity of media sources a single company might own. Preserve public access. Limit the percentage in any one local region. Ensure that automated radio stations do not compromise local public safety and overrun by national broadcasts that care little for and thus silence our community and diversity.

Sincerely,

Penelope E. Nichols

Attachement: transcript of Bill Moyer's NOW program

<http://www.pbs.org/now/politics/mediatimeline.html>

January 18, 2002

A train carrying hazardous materials derails at

1:30 a.m. in Minot, North Dakota, spilling 210,000 gallons of anhydrous ammonia in an incident federal regulators call "catastrophic". Clear Channel Communications owns six out the seven commercial stations in Minot. Minot authorities say when they called with the warning about the toxic cloud, there was no one on the air who could've made the announcement. Clear Channel says someone was there who could have activated an emergency broadcast. But Minot police say nobody answered the phones. (The Associated Press, January 14, 2003 - "A year after derailment, the land has healed, mostly, but what of the people who live in Minot?" by Blake Nicholson). (At the Senate Commerce Committee hearing on January 14, 2003, Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND) cites Minot as an example of how consolidated media can negatively affect a local community. THE NEW YORK TIMES reported on the Minot radio station market again on March 29, 2003 in "On Minot, N.D., Radio, a Single Corporate Voice")